New Tribute Area Added In Memory of John Otterson

Otterson Designed the M.S. Tribute Garden and Conservatory Landscape

It’s no surprise that landscape architect John Otterson loved the outdoors. “He had a passion for nature,” said John’s wife Marcie Otterson. “He especially enjoyed hiking the woods of Pennsylvania; he loved its hills, streams, stone outcroppings and native plants.”

John, a long-time Gardens Advisory Board member, passed away last November. After his passing, his wife Marcie, and their three sons instinctively knew how to honor him. “It seemed natural to honor John with what he loved, in a place he loved,” said Marcie. “We knew we needed to plant redbud trees at Hershey Gardens.”

“The last time John was at the Gardens, I overheard him say that they should plant more redbuds,” said Marcie. “Less than a year later, I watched the last redbud leaf fall from the tree John planted in front of our home. It was a few days before he died. It did not go unnoticed that the redbud’s leaf was shaped like a heart.”

Working with the Gardens team, the family chose a site in the eastern part of the Gardens for John’s tribute garden. “We designed a plan to complement the area,” said Marcie. “There are cherry and magnolia trees nearby, so the addition of the redbud trees are going to make it especially beautiful in the spring.”

“A dogwood tree will be added, as well as six ‘Appalachian Red’ redbud trees, each representing one of our grandchildren,” said Marcie. “Plus, a beautiful, curved backless bench surrounded by natural flat rocks and accent plants.”

The tribute garden should be completed by the end of April. “John would be proud of this garden. Each element is something he often used in his own designs,” said Marcie.

A few years later, John designed the landscape for The Milton & Catherine Hershey Conservatory. “He was able to create a 3D walkthrough to help visualize the outdoor possibilities surrounding the new Conservatory,” said Marcie. “John understood the importance of preserving and caring for Hershey Gardens; he was focused on planning for the future; not one year ahead, but 25 years ahead.”

Two months before his passing, John wrote his resignation letter to the Advisory Board. He ended the letter with the same statement that he said at the end of every Advisory Board meeting: “Let’s take a walk in the Gardens today.”
See a Canopy of Color This Spring

Warmer temperatures and longer days are sure signs that spring is right around the corner! Enjoy all that spring has to offer at Hershey Gardens. The earliest spring blooms begin with Lenten roses, winter aconites, snowdrops, daffodils, hyacinth and Siberian squill – just to name a few. As the weeks unfold, the color intensifies with the blooming magnolia trees, weeping cherries and dogwoods. The flowers on these trees can range from creamy white and yellow to many shades of pink. Late spring will bring irises cloaked in their traditional purple color, as well as in shades of “chocolate” and gold. And to round out the spring color, look for blooming peonies, azaleas and rhododendron.

Please check for updates on spring blooms at HersheyGardens.org.

A Change To This Year’s Tulip Display

For 78 years, Hershey Gardens has welcomed spring with thousands of glorious tulips. We are proud of this long-standing tradition, and we love sharing the breathtaking display with our members and guests.

This spring, however, will be different. 2020 was a difficult year. The pandemic created financial restraints for many nonprofit organizations, and Hershey Gardens was not immune. The worldwide health crisis forced the Gardens to close for almost four months, under the Governor’s mandate.

With so much financial uncertainty looming, we were unable to purchase our normal quantity of tulip bulbs last fall for this year’s spring display.

Last year’s bulbs remain in the ground, in hopes that some will appear. Our diligent gardening staff will be filling in the tulip beds, as needed, with colorful African daisies and pansies. While this patchwork of early spring flowers can’t compare to our normal tulip display, we hope that you will find respite in the arrival of spring - and a glimmer of hope for a better year ahead.

Easter Sunrise Service

Sunday, April 4 at 6:30 a.m. via Facebook (Hershey Gardens)

Hershey Gardens is proud to host the annual Easter Sunrise Service, a tradition that began in 1947. The community is invited to view the pre-recorded non-denominational service (via Facebook only) provided by the Hershey Ministerium. Simply log on to Hershey Gardens’ Facebook page to view the service.

Coming Soon: A New Perennial Garden

New, Expanded Garden Will Serve as a Loving Tribute to Richard “Dick” Wood

When Richard “Dick” Wood passed away in 2020, his family came to Hershey Gardens with a request to help them honor him in a special way.

“Hershey Gardens was the perfect place to bring together the things that he loved most – horticulture and Hershey,” said Dick’s wife Fran Wood.

After a walk through the Gardens, Fran and her son Patrick decided that the Perennial Garden was the perfect place to pay tribute to their late husband and father.

“Over the years, the garden has hosted an array of perennials, but it has never had the opportunity to be planted cohesively, with the entire garden in mind,” said Alyssa Hagarman, horticulture specialist. “When you have the opportunity to create a whole garden at once, you can better choose plants, in terms of color and size, so they will bloom in succession.”

About 40 new flowering perennials will be added, as well as twelve flowering shrubs and two native trees. “Most of the perennials are from the brand ‘Proven Winners’, which are known for their high quality,” said Hagarman. “The renovation is already underway,” said Hagarman. “We hope to have it completed by mid-June.”

Learn more about the new Perennial Garden in the spring issue of The Legacy, or at HersheyGardens.org.
What is your role at Hershey Gardens?
I am responsible for ordering the butterflies for the Butterfly Atrium, which come to us in the chrysalis stage from butterfly farms around the world. I also care for the plants in the Conservatory, including the tropical vegetation in the Butterfly Atrium, and the plants in the Welcome Pavilion and Educational & Horticultural Wing. I also care for the beehive located in the Hoop House.

What is your background?
My background is varied, to say the least! I earned a BA in psychobiology with a concentration in philosophy from Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. Early on, I managed a print and framing shop, worked at an aquarium and was a research assistant in a bio-pharmacology lab. I’ve owned two businesses, was a zookeeper for four rewarding years, am trained and worked as a veterinary technician, and completed the coursework required for a registered nursing degree. Before coming here, I worked for Royer’s Flowers in Hershey.

What is a typical day like for you?
I begin my day at 7 a.m. in the Butterfly Atrium, where I water, fertilize, prune and spray for pests. Next, I’ll tend to some administrative duties and by afternoon, I’ll work on some special projects and tend to the plants in the Educational & Horticultural Wing and in the grow room, which is located in the basement. Finally, I’ll end my day back in the Atrium. Of course, no two days are exactly alike, which gives me a lot of variety.

What is your favorite variety of butterfly?
In an Atrium full of tropical butterflies from all over the world, my favorite is a small, common native butterfly, the buckeye (Junonia coenia). If you look at it closely, this unassuming little flyer has striking patterning and coloration. I love their eyespots, which can range from brown to blue to green and even purple.

How about your favorite tropical plant?
I love plants from the genus Calathea. They are beautiful and diverse in color, pattern and form, but can also be temperamental and demanding divas! I’ve made the effort to understand them; as a result, they’ve produced incredible colors. These plants close their leaves to “pray” every night.

Any part of your position that is more challenging?
The biggest challenge is controlling plant damaging pests. Plant pests thrive in the Atrium’s warm and humid climate. Because some plant pesticides can also be harmful to butterflies, we use safer alternatives like insecticidal soap and horticultural oil. I also rely on other insects to help control plant pests.

How about the most enjoyable part of your job?
I love my early morning time in the Atrium. It’s so quiet, peaceful and awe-inspiring. When the lights first come on, the butterflies “wake up” and begin flying, and soon I’m surrounded...there’s fluttering everywhere! I’ll take a moment to gaze in wonder at this incredible indoor environment. It is amazing to me that these exquisite creatures, from all over the world, now call Hershey Gardens their home. I am lucky and grateful to have this job.

We heard that you recently made your own chocolate, starting with a cacao pod?
Yes it’s true …mostly! I wanted to see if I could make chocolate from “bean to bar,” so I ordered some raw beans, roasted them, and then shelled and winnowed them by hand. Then I ground the nibs in a food processor with sugar and a small amount of sweetened condensed milk, which separated the cocoa butter in the nibs and resulted in a paste. I spread the chocolate paste on a piece of aluminum foil and popped it in the freezer for about 30 minutes. The result was an earthy-tasting dark chocolate with a nice snap and smooth, but slightly grainy texture that held its form at room temperature. Although this method omits a couple steps, it was still delicious. I’d like to try again with other ingredients, like vanilla and orange extracts, or maybe mint. I heard habanero pepper chocolate is especially good.

Do you have any hobbies?
I have many! I am a lifelong equestrian, and I love alpacas (I used to have one!). I knit, crochet and enjoy hand-spinning and dyeing yarn, and quilting. I am also honing my photography skills and am passionate about creatures on our planet. I am obsessed with huskies; I have two! I have four homing pigeons, a population that once numbered 14. Houseplants are everywhere in my house, and I garden and keep bees. You could say I get bored easily, so I’m always searching for my next great passion.

Aside from the Butterfly Atrium, do you have a favorite part of the Gardens?
I love the area under the weeping beech tree. I like its seclusion, and I find the age and size of this tree awe-inspiring. Its weeping habit creates a great little hideaway that provides a unique view of the tree and its branching structure. The sun does wonderful things inside that space when it shines through the leaves. It has been a great backdrop for my kids’ prom pictures through the years!

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The Children’s Garden
“Spa-tacular Garden” Gets a Refresh

A bathtub in the middle of a garden? Wait… what?

Guests who visit The Children’s Garden at Hershey Gardens are usually a bit surprised to find a bathtub nestled in the lush green landscape. Alas, they are in the “Spa-Tacular Garden.”

The Children’s Garden opened in 2003, complete with 23 theme gardens. Each of the theme gardens features an element of hands-on learning and horticulture. The Spa-tacular Garden features a wooden window with a willow “curtain” and rock “slippers” that kids can try on. But the real intrigue comes from the old-fashioned bathtub filled with plants such as loofah sponges and soapwort.

This spring, the quaint garden will receive some improvements. “We are replacing the wooden window in front of the tub,” said Alyssa Hagarman, horticulture specialist. “The new window will include planter boxes with trailing flowers that will act as the curtain.”

“The surrounding landscape is also being reinvigorated,” said Hagarman. “The overgrown arborvitae trees have been removed and are being replaced with a shorter hedge of boxwoods and other flowering shrubs. In keeping with the spa theme, we will be adding some fun and unusual plants used for soaps and perfumes.”

The Spa-Tacular Garden improvements are courtesy of Susan Eggleston, in loving memory of Bernie Campanella, her companion of 20 years.

Hershey Gardens’ Summer “Volunteer” Program
Now Accepting Applications

Do you know a teenager who would enjoy a summer full of blooms, birds and worms? Send them our way!

Students ages 12 to 16 who enjoy working outdoors, learning about the natural world and sharing with others make great Hershey Gardens summer volunteers. This is an excellent opportunity for pre-work experience that will help create an exceptional visitor experience for Hershey Gardens’ guests.

In this program, volunteers assist with a variety of gardening tasks, educational initiatives and guest services. Activities include helping guests explore nature and assisting with crafts, special programs and gardening work.

Our goal is to offer a safe summer program, including outdoor-only activities, small groups and required masks. All CDC recommendations will be strictly followed.

The program begins with a required orientation on June 14 or June 15 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. with shifts beginning the following week. The Volunteer is required to work a minimum of 24 hours throughout the summer, from June 21 through August 18. There are also opportunities for Volunteers to assist with activities throughout the year.

Applicants are required to apply online at HersheyGardens.org before May 7, or until the maximum capacity is reached. Applicants will be contacted for a virtual interview. For more information, please contact Vera Kolstrom at 717-508-5970 or email velkolstrom@hersheygardens.org.
When choosing plants for your 2021 garden, consider these annuals from the Penn State Flower Trials. Penn State Flower Trials are headquartered at the Southeast Agricultural and Research Center (SEAREC) in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Various horticulturists send their plants to SEAREC to be grown and evaluated. Flower Trial staff grow the plants under standardized conditions, rate their performance, and provide tours and information for both commercial growers and home gardeners. Penn State Flower Trials also distribute some of their trial plants to gauge performance in other locations. Hershey Gardens is one of these locations, and you may have seen some of the trial plants in beds there last summer.

Some of the trial plants are so new that they are grown “under number,” meaning that their creators have not yet given them a cultivar name. The plants described here all have a cultivar name (such as ‘Choco Chili’ or ‘Hot 2 Trot’) and will be available for purchase in 2021. Some, such as the coleus FlameThrower™ series, were available at big box stores last summer. But since these are new plants, you may have to search online to find them, or you might want to request them at your favorite garden center.

The plants listed here were all grown as annuals, though some are tender perennials in Pennsylvania. Choices include those selected as “Best in Show” at SEAREC and a few that found their way into the hearts of Flower Trials staff. For complete information on the Flower Trials and 2020 results, see Penn State College of Agriculture Flower Trials.

**Alternanthera dentata ‘Choco Chili’ (FanciFillers™) Westhoff/PAC Elsner**

Sometimes called “Joseph’s Coat,” alternanthera is a tropical plant grown in our area for its summer foliage. ‘Choco Chili’ has appealing foliage in shades of mauve, plum and pink. Its mounded habit makes it a good choice for containers or massed in a garden bed. Best in full to part sun, the 12-inch high foliage lasts through summer heat into early fall.

**Caladium bicolor ‘Hot 2 Trot’ Classic Caladiums**

Another plant grown for its foliage, caladiums, or angel wings, could serve as the “thriller” in a container arrangement. With its stunning red and green foliage, ‘Hot 2 Trot’ makes a bold statement. Reaching about 18 inches in height, ‘Hot 2 Trot’ performs well in both sun and shade.

**Calibrachoa hybrida ‘Good Night Kiss’ (Cabaret™) Ball FloraPlant**

The Penn State Flower Trial gardens are a great place to observe numerous color permutations of calibrachoa, which resembles a small petunia. Sometimes called million bells or calis, calibrachoa is actually a tender perennial grown as an annual. Flowers are borne on 3- to 9-inch trailing stems and are most abundant in full sun. The vivid mauve, black and yellow flowers of ‘Good Night Kiss’ especially appealed to one Flower Trial staffer, who found it a stunning addition to containers.

**Coleus (Solenostemon scutellarioides)**

‘Cajun Spice,’ ‘Salsa Verde’ and ‘Serrano’ (FlameThrower™) Ball FloraPlant

Three cultivars in the coleus FlameThrower™ series received ratings that thrust them into the Best in Show category of Penn State’s 2020 Flower Trials. These coleus cultivars sport especially vivid colors and distinctive incised leaves. ‘Cajun Spice’, ‘Salsa Verde’ and ‘Serrano’ did almost as well in sun as they did in shade, though some shade seems to make the colors more vivid. At 12 to 18 inches high, these coleus cultivars make attractive bedding or container plants.

**Dahlia hybrida ‘Fireball’ (Dalaya™) Selecta One**

I was captivated by this dahlia, whose bicolor yellow and orange flowers resemble small suns. Because of its coloration, ‘Fireball’ is especially attractive to butterflies. Foliage is green, thick and plentiful, and its height and width of 12 to 14 inches makes it ideal for large containers.

**Helichrysum italicum ‘Silver Ribbon’ Selecta One**

Also known as an herb with the common name curry plant, helichrysum ‘Silver Ribbon’ has cool, grey foliage that serves as a foil to flowering annuals and perennials. Drought tolerant and slightly fragrant, ‘Silver Ribbon’ is one of the lankier helichrysums and grows to a height of about 14 inches.
Girl Scout Workshops

Junior Scout “Gardener” Badge Workshop
Sunday, May 16 from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Junior Scouts can pick up a self-guided booklet and stop at stations throughout the gardens to complete their “Gardener” badge. Workshop is $12 per Scout (badge included) and $12 per adult. Program includes admission to the Gardens and Butterfly Atrium for the day. **Advance registration is required at HersheyGardens.org.**

Junior Scout “Flowers Naturalist” Badge Workshop
Sunday, August 8 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Junior Scouts, join us on Rose Day! Pick up a self-guided booklet and stop at various stations to earn most qualifications for the “Flowers” naturalist badge. For an additional fee, Scouts can complete the flower arrangement requirement by creating a small centerpiece using seasonal blooms and accents. Program includes admission to the Gardens and Butterfly Atrium for the day. $12 per Scout. **Advance registration is required at HersheyGardens.org.**

Healthy Steps Walking Program

Get out, get healthy – and enjoy the beautiful views! Hershey Gardens is pleased to announce a new walking program, designed for all levels of walkers.

Simply ask for your Walking Program punch card at your first visit. Bring it back every time you visit the Gardens to walk, and we’ll punch your card. **For every 10 walks, you’ll get a free pass to bring a friend to walk with you!**

Walkers can choose to pay per visit, or become a member. Memberships start at just $50 for an individual. Plus, as a member, you’ll enjoy other benefits such as newsletters, discounts, and an annual member reception. Each lap around the Garden (blue dotted line) is approximately ¾ mile. Walkers can choose how far to walk each visit.

Happy walking!
Online Presentation: Community Read Book Discussion and History of Black Horticulture and Conservation with Abra Lee
Thursday, July 1
Get caught reading as we join community partners for the annual Community Read sponsored by Longwood Gardens. Join us in reading “The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man’s Love Affair with Nature” by J. Drew Lanham with the Hershey Public Library. Guest speaker Abra Lee will weave her personal experiences with major themes in Lanham’s text while discussing the history and significance of black horticulture.
Abra Lee is a national speaker, writer and owner of “Conquer the Soil,” a platform that combines black garden history and current events to raise awareness of horticulture.
This program is sponsored by Friends of the Hershey Public Library, Manada Conservancy and Hershey Gardens.
Check HersheyGardens.org for registration and timing details as they become available.

Rose Day at Hershey Gardens
Sunday, August 8 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Everything is coming up roses at Hershey Gardens! Join us to learn about rose care, watch flower arranging demonstrations, take a tour of the Historic Rose Garden, enjoy kids’ activities, an ice cream truck and more! Included in admission; members are free.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show
Sunday, August 8 at 1 and 3 p.m.
in The Children’s Garden Amphitheatre
Presented by Mt. Gretna Theatre
Experience Eric Carle’s timeless classics as a fun one-hour stage play! The critically-acclaimed show features a menagerie of 70+ large scale magical puppets. Every show also features two other Eric Carle short stories.

Bug-O-Rama
Sunday, September 12 from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Explore the world of bugs in this family-friendly hands-on day! Come for amazing displays of unique live insects from around the world and participate in a variety of fun bug activities. Included in admission, members are free.
Loose in the Lab
June 28 - July 2, 2021
Full Day and Half Day options available
For ages 7 – 11
Science Explorers has compiled our favorite camp experiments into this week-long adventure! Make a groovy lava lamp test tube, mix up chemical reactions, erupt a volcano, make chalkboard and fluffy slime, build a solar oven to make treats, launch pompoms with your own catapult, create your own motorized invention, make a foaming “matter monster”, and go on a fossil dig.

Then, stay for the afternoon as we come back down to earth. Transform polymers into a rainbow of color, investigate the properties of light when you build a kaleidoscope, explore the concept of density as you create a colorful density tower, build a metal detector to identify conductors, demonstrate how air pressure can lift objects and make them fly, and conduct a powder analysis lab.

Stem Lab Extravaganza
July 26 - 30, 2021
Full Day and Half Day Options Available
For ages 7 – 11
Calling all science fanatics! If you didn't get a chance to experience our 2020-21 club topics, then this is the camp for you! Get ready to concoct cool chemistry creations, formulate new physics ideas, engineer solutions to problems, and investigate how your own body works. In the morning sessions you’ll get gassy with noisy putty, make a working lung model, uncover the mysterious world of microbes, compete in a tower building challenge, and best of all, learn some really cool science magic tricks to play on your siblings or wow your relatives at the family reunion.

Then, stay for the afternoon sessions and you’ll mix up gooey, snotty slime, learn the ins and outs of the digestive system, construct a ping pong launcher, make an oscilloscope to create laser art, build your own bristle-bot racer and learn even more science magic!

Final Frontiers: Sea & Space
July 19 - 23, 2021
Full Day and Half Day options available
For ages 7 – 11
Each morning, explore the mysterious realms of sea and space as you enter the exciting worlds of marine biology and astronomy! Dive in and examine weird wonders of the sea, observe the anatomy of a real fish and learn the ancient technique of gyotaku or “fish rubbing”, and discover the ocean’s living fossils. Then blast off to discovering space and stars as you make an out-of-this-world solar system model, prepare for lift-off as you build and launch your own stomp rocket while learning about Newton’s Laws of Motion, complete a mission to the Moon, and design and build a space capsule that will safely bring your “eggnautra” in for a landing.

Marvelous Mondays
July 12, 19, 26 and August 2, 9 from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Mondays are marvelous in The Children’s Garden! Join us for kid’s activities, demonstrations and entertainment! Included in admission; members are free.